

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 TEGUCI 02418 091908Z

61

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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R 062144Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 283

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 2418

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ES, HO

SUBJECT: HONDURAS/EL SALVADOR DISPUTE

REF: (A) SAN SALVADOR 2171, (B) TEGUCIGALPA 1677

(C) STATE 120951

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE GOES IS APPARENTLY UNCERTAIN ABOUT THE GOH'S POSITION IN REGARD TO A SETTLEMENT BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES EVEN THOUGH THE GOH HAS REPEATEDLY STATED THAT ITS POSITION IS BASED UPON A GLOBAL AND SIMULTANEOUS SETTLEMENT OF THE DISPUTE. ALL RECENT REGIMES HAVE SUPPORTED THAT POLICY AND THERE IS NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THE PRESENT GOH WILL CHANGE ITS POSITION. THE NEGOTIATIONS ARE STRANDED ON THE QUESTION OF WHAT TO DO ABOUT THOSE ISSUES STILL IN DISPUTE AFTER INFORMAL OR FORMAL BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS HAVE ADVANCED AS FAR AS POSSIBLE. UNTIL THIS ISSUE IS RESOLVED, THE PROSPECTS FOR FORWARD MOTION OR MEANINGFUL NEGOTIATIONS ARE DIM. END SUMMARY.

1. AS POINTED OUT IN REFTEL B, AND IN CONTRAST TO

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PAGE 02 TEGUCI 02418 091908Z

BORGONOVO'S STATEMENT THAT GOH IS "UNABLE POLITICALLY

TO DEFINE ITS POSITION," THE GOH HAS CONSISTENTLY ADHERED TO THE POSITION OF A "GLOBAL AND SIMULTANEOUS" SETTLEMENT OF THE ISSUES IN DISPUTE. FOR THAT MATTER, IT WAS EXPLICITLY STATED BY FONMIN GALVEZ IN HIS PRESENTATION TO THE COMMITTEE OF SEVEN AS REPORTED IN REFTEL C. THE MEETINGS IN SANTO TOMAS DE CASTILLA AND JALAPA WERE PUBLIC RELATIONS ATTEMPTS TO SET THE STAGE FOR NEGOTIATIONS AND DID NOT INVOLVE NEGOTIATIONS OR DECISIONS ON THE ISSUES AND NO COMMITMENTS WERE UNDERTAKEN BY THE GOH OTHER THAN TO "EXPLORE" THE POSSIBILITIES OF A RENEWAL OF RELATIONS. THERE WAS A LOUD PUBLIC OUTCRY AGAINST THE POSSIBILITY OF TAKING SUCH A STEP PRIOR TO THE CONCLUSION OF A GLOBAL SETTLEMENT UPON LOPEZ' RETURN TO HONDURAS. THE BATRES-BORGONOVO AGREEMENT WAS ESSENTIALLY AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TWO FONMINS FOR THIRD PARTY MEDIATION WHICH WOULD MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SETTLING THE DISPUTE. THE RECOMMENDATIONS WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN BINDING AND EACH COUNTRY WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACCEPT OR REJECT THE FINDINGS. LOPEZ AND THE CABINET DECIDED THAT SUCH A PROPOSAL DID NOT GIVE HONDURAS SUFFICIENT GUARANTEES AND DECIDED THE DISPUTE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WITHIN THE PURVIEW OF THE OAS WHERE THERE WOULD BE MECHANISMS AND SAFEGUARDS FOR A SETTLEMENT TREATY. FONMIN GALVEZ PRESENTED SUCH A PROPOSAL TO THE OAS COMMITTEE OF SEVEN.

2. THE GOES PERCEPTION OF A "CONFUSED" GOH POLITICAL SITUATION WHICH CAUSES THEM TO HESITATE IN ENTERING NEGOTIATIONS MAY BE MORE OF A PRETEXT FOR NOT PROCEEDING WITH NEGOTIATIONS THAN ANYTHING ELSE. IF, BY A "SERIOUS" GOH POSITION, THE GOES MEANS A CHANGED ONE, IT IS LIKELY TO HAVE A LONG WAIT INDEED. THE INSISTENCE OF HONDURAS ON A GLOBAL AND SIMULTANEOUS SETTLEMENT HAS BEEN REITERATED MANY TIMES BY RECENT REGIMES, INCLUDING THAT OF COLONEL MELGAR. WE BELIEVE THIS POSITION IS FULLY BACKED BY THE LT. COLONELS. INDEED, NO PUBLIC OFFICIAL OF HONDURAS COULD TAKE ANY OTHER POSITION WITHOUT CREATING

A MAJOR POLITICAL OUTCRY. THE APPARENT GOES POLICY OF
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PAGE 03 TEGUCI 02418 091908Z

WAITING UNTIL THE HONDURAN POLITICAL SITUATION BECOMES "CLEARER" MAY WELL HAVE THE EFFECT OF POSTPONING THE NEGOTIATIONS INDEFINITELY BECAUSE THE SITUATION WILL PROBABLY NOT BECOME ANY "CLEARER" BEFORE EL SALVADOR MOVES INTO ITS ELECTIONEERING PERIOD.

3. THE CENTRAL POINT ON WHICH THE NEGOTIATIONS ARE STRANDED IS THE QUESTION OF WHAT TO DO ABOUT THOSE ISSUES STILL IN

DISPUTE AFTER INFORMAL OR FORMAL BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS HAVE ADVANCED AS FAR AS THEY CAN GO. THE GOH IS UNWILLING TO CONTINUE AN OPEN-ENDED SERIES OF BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS THAT LACK A SPECIFIED MECHANISM TO ARBITRATE UNRESOLVED ISSUES. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE GOES, ON THE OTHER HAND, IS UNWILLING TO ACCEPT ANYTHING THAT SMACKS OF THIRD PARTY ARBITRATION. THE MEETINGS BETWEEN THE SALVADORAN AND HONDURAN MILITARY HAVE BEEN USEFUL IN CREATING A BETTER ATMOSPHERE, AND MELGAR HAS STATED TO US HIS INTENTION TO CONTINUE THEM, BUT THEY HAVE HAD AND CAN HAVE NO IMPACT ON THE CENTRAL QUESTIONS. UNTIL THIS ISSUE IS RESOLVED THE PROSPECTS FOR FORWARD MOTION OR MEANINGFUL NEGOTIATIONS ARE DIM.

4. IN A NEWSPAPER INTERVIEW CARRIED IN THE PRESS ON JUNE 6, FONMIN GALVEZ STATED THAT HE AND FONMIN BORGONOVO HAD REACHED AGREEMENT IN WASHINGTON DURING THE COMMITTEE OF SEVEN MEETING THAT IT WAS "NECESSARY TO RENEW THE NEGOTIATIONS TO ENCOUNTER THE DEFINITIVE SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES". HE SAID THE GOH WAS WELL ADVANCED IN DEVELOPING ITS VIEWS ON WHAT MECHANISMS AND PROCEDURES COULD BE USED IN SUCH NEGOTIATIONS. HE SAID THAT NO DATE HAD BEEN FIXED FOR THE NEGOTIATIONS, BUT THAT HE EXPECTED TO TALK WITH FONMIN BORGONOVO IN THE NEAR FUTURE. HE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT RECENTLY THERE HAD BEEN NO INCIDENTS ALONG THE FRONTIER. IF SITUATION PRESENTS ITSELF AMBASSADOR WOULD LIKE DISCREETLY TO URGE FONMIN TO RESUME DIALOGUE WITH FONMIN BORGONOVO.
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